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SUBJECT: IRAQ'S PROGRESS REPORT ON MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

REF: A. Baghdad 2106
[1](#)B. Baghdad 2621

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[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The GOI's completion of its "Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Monitoring Indicators" report shows that the government may be serious about tracking progress on socio-economic indicators. According to the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology's (COSIT's) August 2009 report, literacy and health standards have improved slightly in Iraq. More Iraqis, however, are failing to get their minimum daily required calories and elementary school enrollment is down. End Summary.

BACKGROUND ON MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

[1](#)2. (U) The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were drawn from the development targets of the UN Millennium Declaration adopted by 189 nations in September 2000. The eight MDGs break down into 21 quantifiable socio-economic targets that are measured by 60 indicators. Progress is measured on each indicator for the years of 1990 to 2015.

[1](#)3. (SBU) COSIT's August 2009 report, "Millennium Development Goals Monitoring Indicators," compares recent statistics on the MDGs, such as from the World Bank-funded 2007 Household Socio-economic Survey, to those from GOI surveys from the early 1990s. (Comment: The methodologies used in the various surveys may not be comparable, as some of the results seem contradictory. End comment.) The GOI began tracking Iraq's MDG progress in 2005, and has formed an interagency Higher Committee on the Millennium Development Goals to promote development and attract donor funding. The Ministry of Planning is also reportedly using the MDGs as the cornerstone of its upcoming National Development Plan. (Note: The COSIT report is only available in Arabic. We reported on Iraq's progress related to the Millennium Challenge Corporation indicators in ref A. End note.)

POVERTY IS DOWN, BUT
FOOD SECURITY IS WORSE

[1](#)3. (SBU) According to the COSIT report, Iraq has already met the first MDG target - reduce the proportion of people living on less than one U.S. dollar per day by half over the period from 1990 to [1](#)2015. In 1990, 27.5 percent of the population fell below that level, and now that figure is reportedly 3.1 percent. (Comment: This purported improvement is not credible as a measure of real poverty in Iraq. Between the 1990 survey and the COSIT report, there were two decades of inflation. Whether exchange rates, purchasing power, and the informal economy's role were considered the same way in both surveys is unclear. End Comment.)

[1](#)4. (SBU) Reported incidence of severe malnourishment in Iraq is down, yet the percentage of Iraqis who lack minimum daily nutrition is up. In 2003, 11 percent of the population was malnourished, but that improved to 3.1 percent in 2007, surpassing the MGD 2015 goal of 5.5 percent. The WorldFood Program considers one million

Iraqis, about four percent of the population, to be food insecure. In 1990, nine percent of children under five were underweight, while that figure was 7.6 percent in 2006, short of the 2015 MGD goal of 4.5 percent. The COSIT study, however, noted that 20 percent of Iraqi citizens lacked minimum daily nutrition in 1991, and that figure increased to 22 percent in 2007. (Comment: These statistics do not reflect the market distortions created by the Public Distribution System (PDS), in which monthly food baskets go to almost every Iraqi family. The baskets are supposed to provide 2200 calories per family member each day, but a small percentage of Iraqis sell their food rations for cash, sometimes even to the

ration distributor himself. This implies the PDS is failing, and that the GOI should overhaul the PDS in the near future (ref. B). End Comment.)

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RISING

15. (U) According to the COSIT report, youth unemployment (ages 15-24) has increased for both sexes since the MDG examination period began. Total youth unemployment was 7.1 percent in 1990, but rose to 30 percent in 2008. It went from 7.2 percent to 30.1 percent for males, and 6.3 percent to 29.7 percent for females. Some 240,000 youth and returning refugees enter the labor market each year, exacerbating one of Iraq's most pressing economic concerns.

FEWER KIDS IN SCHOOL, BUT HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF THEM FINISHING

16. (U) Iraq is having difficulty meeting the MDG target for education: that all children should start and complete elementary school. Elementary school enrollment in Iraq has declined from 90.8 percent in 1990 to 84.8 percent in 2007. But the percentage of Iraqi children who start school and then complete at least five years of education has increased from 75.6 percent in 1990 to 92 percent in 2007. Refugee and internally displaced children are the least likely to be in school. Child labor also contributes to the relatively low enrollment rate.

FEMALE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RATIO UP SIGNIFICANTLY

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17. (U) Falling school enrollment appears due to declining male enrollment. Female education enrollment, relative to male enrollment, is up at all levels. The MDG target is for the ratio of girls-to-boys to be 100 percent. Between 1990 and 2007, that ratio has improved from 79.5 percent to 94.2 percent for girls in elementary school. It improved from 64.1 percent to 76.9 percent for secondary school, from 50.9 percent to 86.6 percent for undergraduate enrollment, and from 25.3 percent to 61.6 percent for graduate school. Because overall primary school enrollment has declined, enrollment for all subsequent levels will likely drop over the coming years. Part of the reason that the ratio of females-to-males in school has improved may be due to families encouraging boys to drop out and go to work, while keeping daughters (who are considered more vulnerable) at school because it is a "safe" place during the day.

LITERACY IMPROVING, ESPECIALLY AMONG WOMEN

18. (U) The increased ratio of female-to-male school enrollment also raises the gender ratio of literacy. Overall literacy has improved from 78.6 percent of the population in 1990 to 83.9 percent in 2007. Young women as a group are more literate than before. The percent of literate females to males aged 15-24 was 75.6 percent in 1990, but hit 91.4 in 2007. The MDG target is universal literacy by 2015. With more than 16 percent of the population still illiterate, Iraq is unlikely to achieve this MDG goal in time.

SLIGHT GAINS IN HEALTH

19. (U) Iraq has shown some improvement across all health indicators

since 1990, but more work is necessary to achieve the MDG goal. The mortality rate of infants per 1000 live births declined from 62 in 1990 to 41 in 2006 (the MDG goal is 21 by 2015). As of 2006, 88.6 percent of births were supervised by health personnel, up from 50 percent in 1990. Reaching the MDG of 100 percent by 2015 is unlikely. Maternal mortality is down from 117 per 100,000 births in 1990 to 84 in 2006, which is still well above the 2015 goal of 29. The percentage of one-year olds getting their measles vaccinations has remained relatively constant: 80 percent in 1990 up to 81 percent in 2007. The drying up of marshland areas has contributed to a large reduction in malaria incidence, with the incidence rate dropping from 26.8 per 100,000 in 1990 to 0.1 in 2006.

WATER -----

¶10. (U) The percentage of the population with sustainable access to an improved source of water has only improved slightly between 1990 and 2007. In urban areas, it improved from 96.3 to 97.5 percent, below the 2015 goal of 98.2. In rural areas, it improved from 47.1 percent to 50.3, short of the goal of 73.6 percent by 2015. Since 2007, however, drought conditions in Iraq have worsened, and water shortages have become an acute problem in urban areas such as Basra.

BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY SPREADING TO MORE PEOPLE -----

¶11. (U) The benefits of new technology have spread quickly around Iraq. Although phone landline penetration decreased from 5.6 per 100 people in 1990 to 5.1 in 2007, this has been offset by a boom in the number of Iraqi mobile phone users. In 2007, there were 39.1 phones per 100 people, very close to the 2015 MDG of 40 per 100 people. Satellite dish and personal computer ownership has grown rapidly. The percentage of families with a satellite dish jumped from 32 percent in 2004 to 88.3 percent in 2007, well on the way to the goal of 100 percent ownership by 2015. Families with a personal computer have more than doubled from 3.6 percent in 2004 to 7.4 percent in 2007. Iraq should easily achieve its personal computer ownership goal of 10 percent of all families having personal computers by 2015.

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